A Newsletter About Prevention, Preparedness, and Response

Spill SCENE

WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF ECOLOGY

Prevention Section

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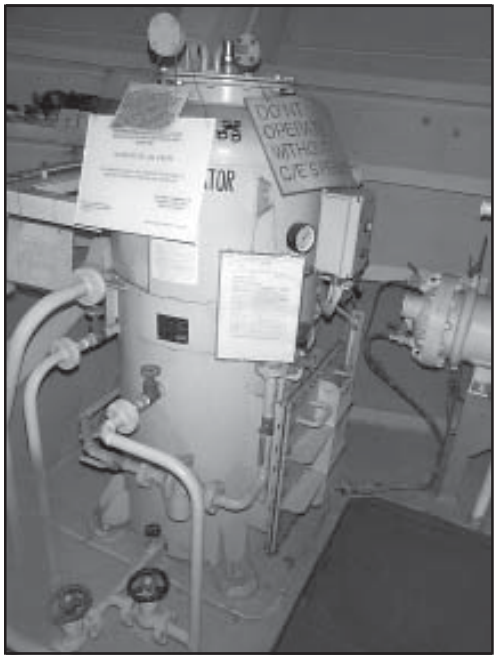
Vessel Waste Oil Dumping Investigations

Ecology vessel inspectors are encountering the problem of overboard dumping of waste oil, sludge, and oily waste in violation of the *International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships* (MARPOL) with distressing frequency. Vessel crews are dumping these waste products overboard instead of incinerating them or transferring them ashore and they are also disconnecting their oily water separator (OWS) pollution prevention systems rendering them useless.

Vessel inspectors partner with the US Coast Guard (USCG), US Department of Justice (USDOJ), and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to investigate waste oil dumping. This partnership has led to the recent prosecution and conviction of two ship operating companies and three engineers for the illegal disposal of waste oil at sea.

Vessel oily water separator.



Ecology and USCG inspectors boarded the car carrier, *Cygnus,* in the Columbia River after receiving a tip from a former crew member that waste oil was discharged overboard on the high seas. While aboard the ship, inspectors found a flexible hose used to bypass the oily water separator and pump waste oil overboard. In addition, there was fresh paint on an overboard valve assembly to hide evidence of previous misconduct. Dismantled, the overboard valve was found to be contaminated with oil. Further, a diver inspecting *Cygnus'* hull found a long streak of oil on the side of the ship behind the discharge port. The chief engineer pled guilty to making false statements in the oil record book and was sentenced to serve three months in prison and deportation to Korea. The first assistant engineer pled guilty to making a false statement to the USCG concerning the disposal of waste oil from the *Cygnus*. He was responsible for overseeing all of the operations of the engine room, including the disposal of waste oil. He was sentenced to two years probation and deportation to Korea. The *Cygnus* was chartered to a company that ships Toyota and Lexus vehicles from Japan to the U.S.

Another vessel, the *Rubin Stella*, was targeted before it docked at port in Longview, Washington. The USCG received a tip from the Royal Canadian Air Force - they had spotted the *Rubin Stella* sailing with an oily sheen in its wake. Upon boarding, Ecology and USCG inspectors found two flanges previously connected to a hose used to bypass the oily water separator and dump waste oil overboard. Investigation revealed fabricated entries in the oil record book. The chief engineer admitted that during the period from July 31, 2001 thru June 23, 2002 he had directed other crew members to discharge oily waste overboard. The chief engineer was sentenced to twelve months plus one day in prison for knowingly making false entries in the oil record book and the concealment of information from the government about the bypass hose.

Spills Program vessel inspectors and investigators are working with our federal partners on several other criminal investigations of vessels illegally dumping oil, providing expertise and experience to joint boarding teams on the West Coast and coordinating with the USDOJ when the cases are brought up for prosecution.

Preparedness Section

DRILLTRAC – A New Initiative for the Spills Program

For most oil handling companies and facilities, the PREP triennial drill program began again in the year 2000. The three year cycle includes three drills including one worst case scenario exercise. The primary purpose of these drills is to test the effectiveness of the plan holder's oil spill contingency plan.

Ecology has found that when staff train and coach plan holders during drills, all participants are not only more prepared for a spill but work together more effectively because of the drill experience.

Industry has shown tremendous improvement in the ability to implement the Incident Command System (ICS) as their spill management system for spills and drills.

The Spills Program determined that they needed a process to further develop the skills of responders in managing incidents as a team with the Coast Guard, local governments, tribes and the responsible party. The goal being to ensure that all Ecology staff participating in spills and drills is capable of performing and evaluating their roles and responsibilities in the Incident Command System (ICS).

In order to hold the Spills Program staff to the same high standard as industry, DrillTrac, the Spills Program drill training and competency program for drill evaluation, participation, planning and coaching was developed.

Work began in January 2002 on the development of DrillTrac. Genwest, a private consultant, was hired to assist in the designed of the drill program.

The curriculum is based on the NIIMS version of ICS and contains modules similar to SAFETRAC, the Program's long standing response training and competency program. Full implementation of DrillTrac is expected to begin in 2004.

Full implementation translates into training and testing of all Spills staff. The drill design and evaluation modules will also be more fully developed and implemented by Spills Preparedness staff in 2004. Copies of the DrillTrac manual are available in electronic format via the Spills website (www.ecy.wa.gov/spills/). If you have questions, please contact Elin Storey at (425) 649-7111.

The Northwest Area Committee is developing a comprehensive **E-MAIL** distribution list for stakeholders and members of the community interested in changes to the Northwest Area Contingency Plan, area response policies, updates to Geographic Response Plans and all other pertinent notifications. We strongly encourage the public to sign up for this **E-MAIL** service. It will provide updates to the northwest area planning process. To be added to the new **E-MAIL** distribution list, please go to **http://rrt10nwac.com** and click on "Join Email List".

Reponse Section

Methamphetamine Lab Activities and the Community

Cheap and easy to make, meth has become the drug of choice for a number of addicts in Washington.

Their addiction goes beyond their own homes, jobs and families where they often begin stealing to support their habit. Local enforcement personnel suggest that meth addicts are responsible for most theft, fraud, forgery and burglary occurring in their jurisdictions.

Meth users often end up losing their homes, businesses, and jobs, leaving a long list of creditors behind. Landlords and health officials - paid by taxpayer dollars - work to clean up the contamination.

Hospitals around the country are dealing with patients seriously disturbed by meth use and babies born with their mother's addiction. Long time meth users often end up there with no money to pay for their care - yet another drain on the taxpayer dollar. Taxpayers also pay for the cost of imprisonment when users are finally caught for their multiple crimes.

Drug task forces have organized across the state to deal with the cross city/county/state problems. Enforcement agencies have gathered to share information and strategies for dealing with the meth nightmare. Still the problems continue.

Meth making supplies include flammable solvents, lithium batteries, phosphorus, automotive fuel additives, drain cleaner, battery acid, and propane tanks filled with anhydrous ammonia. Unscrupulous meth cooks dump their waste

everywhere: Parks, dumpsters, national forests, school playgrounds, parking lots, etc., exposing the public to the hazardous potential of these chemicals.

Ecology spill responders answer calls everyday reporting meth lab dump sites. Since state legislation was passed in 1990, Ecology Spill Response Program has carried the meth lab cleanup workload for the entire state, directly serving city and county governments. Ecology's regional response teams provide around the clock on-site response and disposal services when called in by local law enforcement agencies. Between 1990 and 2002, they cleaned up 6,785 meth labs or dump sites.

To put the meth lab workload into perspective, consider the following numbers. In 2002, spill responders screened over 4,000 reported spills statewide of which there were over 2,300 field responses, of which 1,693 were meth labs. Calendar year 2002 averaged over 140 meth labs or dump sites cleaned up every month, which is equivalent to 4.6 labs a day. This means that there is a meth lab cleanup up in Washington on average every 5 hours!

Some of the waste generated has the potential to harm or kill unsuspecting people who may inadvertently become exposed. Of particular hazard to the public and to spill responders are the jury-rigged propane tanks modified to store anhydrous ammonia and the improvised hydrochloric acid gas generators. These pressurized corrosive, toxic, and potentially flammable materials are often stored in incompatible containers that were not designed to be used in this manner. In 2002, spill responders removed and disposed of 1,124 cylinders of compressed anhydrous ammonia gas (including 1,026 five-gallon propane tanks and 98 large 150-pound cylinders), and 707 home-made hydrochloric acid gas generators.

Ecology spill responders have become more cost efficient when dealing with meth lab cleanup. Through several innovations in waste management, they have significantly reduced the disposal costs of meth lab waste from more than $3,500 in 1997 to under $800 per lab site by the end of 2002. Our approach has been referred to as the 'Gold Standard' in managing meth lab waste and has been modeled by other states nationwide. The Ecology meth lab response team was also recognized by Governor Locke through the *Governor's Award for Service and Quality Improvement*.

Public Safety is our ultimate concern, and education has become an important part of dealing with the meth problem. Spill responders have coordinated numerous events with local and national news outlets including several media photo events at newly discovered meth labs. In the fall of 2002, a camera crew from TVW, the statewide government cable television network, accompanied spill responders to a large rural meth lab. Ecology responders provided a detailed narrative of their activities during meth lab cleanups as video was taken. The completed video has aired numerous times statewide.

Cleaning up meth labs is just one of the ways Ecology spill responders are positively helping the lives and property of Washington's citizens every single day of the year. Unfortunately, it appears that meth labs will continue to plague our state into the foreseeable future. Our Spill Response Team will continue to work with local governments to provide responsive, cost-effective management of the waste to minimize the risks to public health as much as possible.

Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA)

When 25 or more gallons of oil are spilled into Washington waters, the individual or company responsible for that spill must pay for any damage done to the natural resources. The Department of Ecology's Resource Damage Assessment (RDA) Committee is responsible for assessing damages related to that incident. This committee is made up of all state natural resource trustees with Ecology as chair. Responsible parties come before the RDA committee where incident is discussed and the committee decides how to assess damages. Damage claims can be either monetary or in the form of a restoration proposal to account for lost resource values.

As of October 2003, the RDA Committee has processed 22 cases which have spilled in aggregate a little more than 10,000 gallons of oil to state waters. The committee has two options when considering damage assessments. In most cases a compensation schedule is used to calculate damages to the environment but the responsible party may also submit a restoration project in lieu of monetary payments. Cash payments are deposited in the Coastal Protection Fund (CPF) for the primary purpose of funding restoration projects.

Recently the CPF participated in a project that epitomizes the joint cooperation and partnerships that make restoration projects so popular.

Under the direction of Harlan Kredit, the Lynden Christian High School science class has been working hard to re-establish a diversity of historical habitats and

Continued on pg. 4

NRDA cont.

species to Fish Trap Creek located northeast of Bellingham. They have acquired a historical wetland that had been used by a meat processing facility as an offal dump. They cleaned it up, and with the help of volunteer machine and operator time, recreated more than twice the original acreage of wetland and riparian buffer side-channel habitat.

Several species of water foul and fish including Endangered Species Act listed Chinook and Coho salmon will benefit when the side-channel is reconnected to Fish Trap Creek. The purpose of the off-channel habitat is to provide refuge adjacent to the main stream channel. The CPF Committee provided funding for the re-vegetation portion of the project. See Figures 1 and 2.

The students maintain and monitor the site year round as part of their education. Projects like this and many other ones that the RDA and CPF committees fund have provided many additional resource values for the state of Washington.

Fig. 1 - Fish Trap Creek side channel appearance prior to re-vegetation.

Fig. 2 - Results of last year's re-vegetation efforts along the new side channel.

Spill Scene

Spill Scene is published by the *Washington State Department of Ecology* to provide information on oil and hazardous substance spill prevention, preparedness and response. We welcome your comments and questions. Call (360) 407-7455 or write: Editor, **Spill Scene**, Department of Ecology, Spills Program, P.O. Box 47701, Olympia, WA 98504-7701. Visit our website at www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/spills/spills.html

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